

My family is large. I have 6 brothers and one sister. We were spread over 30 years from my oldest sister to my younger brother. And, I have so many nieces and nephews and great-niece and great-nephews that I simply stopped counting.

My sister turns 80 in a couple of years. Like many of my sister's generation, her and her husband also had a large family. 4 girls and a boy. Her children and I were playmates because 3 of my nieces were a little older than I was. Two were identical twins: Rinda and Linda. Their younger sister, Brenda, was born just one month ahead of my birth and was a bridesmaid at my wedding. Along with a younger brother and sister, at one point, my sister had 5 children all under the age of 5. All relatively close to my age.

And, when there was a holiday, either Thanksgiving or Christmas, everyone came to my parent's home. And, there was a great feast. It was a place of comfort. My mom would prepare an incredible meal. We had great food, football to watch on the enormous 25" color TV, and the environment was very welcoming. Depending on the year, the game would feature Don Meredith, Craig Morton, or our own Roger Staubach, playing some dreadful team. My mom would always lead the prayer before the meal, remembering those less fortunate and thanking God for his blessing on the family. Everyone played their part in preparing and enjoying the celebration.

It was a different time. It was a simpler time. We didn't have to worry about ISIS or Ebola. Polio was conquered, the space race was on, and we were landing men on the moon.

As a people, we like to gather and celebrate – whether it is a Texas-OU game watching party, or the holidays – as it was with my family.

In the Gospel today, God is calling us to a feast – to a celebration. He calls the good and the bad to the feast. All are welcome. And, God is adamant that the banquet hall will be filled. The homeless are welcome, the sick are welcome, sinners are welcome, the young and the old are welcome, the rich are welcome, as well as the poor.

God is inviting us to a place of comfort. God is welcoming us. He wants to feed us. Like my mom, He has prepared an incredible meal. He has prepared great food, He is serving great wine, and all are experiencing a wonderful time.

But, there are some people who don't take the invitation from God too seriously. Some don't pay attention at all. Some are too busy - there's too much going on in their lives to even think about the banquet. Then, there are even others who listen to the invitation and choose to ignore it. Despite this, God goes in search of people to fill his banquet hall.

When you get to the feast, you may think, "this is great". In this banquet, we sit in the most comfortable chair with something to drink and simply wait for dinner to be served.

Well, if you think that, that is why the last part of the Gospel is so important. Everyone is invited. But, you can't go through life lazy or indulgent. You must make an effort in life to follow God's commandments of "loving the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind... and, with loving your neighbor as yourself." This is how you clothe yourself in fine attire as a Christian. It isn't in what you wear, it is what is in here (point to your chest). And, it is in what you do with what God has given you. That is how you clothe yourself with Christ.

This past week, my sister's oldest daughter, Rinda, passed away. Just six months earlier, her sister, Linda, her identical twin passed away. With their death, I recall Psalm 144, "LORD, what is man that you take notice of him; the son of man, that you think of him? Man is but a breath, his days are like a passing shadow."

In their departing at such a young age, I have learned that no one knows whether we will be dressed well enough for the banquet. It is only through our faith, our continuous efforts to obey the teachings of Christ, our constant preparation for the feast, that we can trust in His mercy and hope to remain with God in the Kingdom of Heaven.

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